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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC radio stations, Tuesday, October 10, 1933.

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Hello Folks: We didn't have a Garden Calendar on the Farm and Home Hour last week, but two weeks ago, you may recall I gave you a few pointers about the proper temperature at which to store the various fruits and vegetables.

A day or two ago, Dr. D. F. Fisher, who has charge of our Transportation and Storage Investigations, suggested that the farm and home folks might be interested in the results of some recent experiments on the ripening of Kieffer pears. You know Kieffer pears are grown over a pretty big section of the country, but most of us don't consider them very highly from the standpoint of quality. One writer has alluded to the Kieffer pear as the most "pretentious cheat" in the orchard.

The storage tests with pears are being handled by Mr. J. M. Lutz of Mr. Fisher's office, and as a result of two season's work he has shown that you can get excellent quality in Kieffer pears if you'll ripen them at the proper temperature which is 60 to 65 degrees. The pears become soft and melting approaching the quality of good Bartlett pears if they are properly handled. Mr. Lutz found, however, that the temperature had to be very carefully controlled between 60 and 65 degrees. At 70 degrees the rate of softening is considerably slower and the quality is about what you would ordinarily expect of a Kieffer pear. When you get the temperature above 70 degrees, the rate of ripening is still slower and the flavor not so good, and the higher you get the temperature the poorer the flavor. Another advantage of ripening Kieffer pears at a temperature from 60 to 65 degrees is that there is less decay than at high temperatures.

Mr. Lutz carried this work still further and he put some of the pears in cold storage at 32 degrees for 30 to 60 days, then he placed them in a temperature of 60 degrees and ripened them and the quality was good. Some of the pears that were ripened at 60 to 65 degrees were canned, also those ripened at higher temperatures, and in every case the pears that had been ripened at 60 degrees were superior in flavor and texture, in fact, they were nearly equal to a standard grade of canned Bartletts. The hard woody cells so common in Kieffer pears were still somewhat apparent in some of the halves, and this showed the need for deep coring in preparing them for canning. These experiments go to prove what I said two weeks ago that temperatures have a lot to do with the quality of fruits and vegetables.

I know of cases where a man took some of the nicest of his Kieffer pears and wrapped them in old woolen blankets and placed them in an upstairs room to ripen. Without realizing it he was providing just about the right temperature and other ideal conditions for the proper ripening of the pears.

If you have a nice lot of Kieffer pears on hand, it would be a good idea to store them in a room where the temperature will be between 60 and 65 degrees. Dr. Fisher suggests that this information should be of great value to canners who are canning large quantities of Kieffer pears as the quality of their canned product may be so greatly improved by holding the pears for a time in ripening rooms at 60 to 65 degrees.

A number of people have written me asking for the best way to care for dahlia and canna roots, also gladiolus corms during the winter. Most of these requests have come from the people who live in the north where the storage of these roots is a real problem. You folks who live in the south can often heave your cannas right in the ground all winter. Right now I am expecting "Jack Frost" to pay my section of the country a visit almost any night and kill the tops of my dahlias and cannas. When that happens I will go out the next morning and cut off all of the tops close to the ground. In case the weather doesn't become any colder, I'll leave the dahlia and canna roots in the ground for a few days, then lift them with a spade or spading fork and take them into the part of my cellar where I store my potatoes and canned fruits. I have a table along one side of this cellar and I spread a thin layer of soil on the cellar floor underneath this table and set the canna roots close together on the bed of soil. Unless there is plenty of soil adhering to the canna roots I sift some extra soil in between them as they rest on the cellar floor. If the soil about the canna roots gets very dry during the winter I give them a little water.

In the case of the dahlias I usually pack the clumps of roots in sand and tubs or boxes. Dahlia roots must be kept fairly dry, but not so dry that they will shrivel. Another method is to clean all of the soil from them and pack them in barrels or boxes and keep them in a fairly dry cellar at about the same temperature that you would keep white potatoes. Examine the dahlia roots occasionally and if they are shriveling you can sprinkle a little water over them, or sprinkle the cellar floor to add moisture to the air in the cellar. Gladiolus corms should be dug, the tops removed, the corms well dried then store them on trays or in shallow, open crates in a dry cellar or in a room where they will not freeze.

Next time on the air Fixing Up the Home Surroundings.